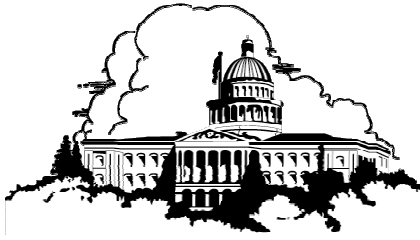


Assembly Speaker pro Tempore
Christine Kehoe
Chair

Senator Sheila James Kuehl
Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg
Assemblymember John Laird
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LGBT Caucus Hails Massachusetts Court Decision *Protects Rights of Same-Sex Couples*

Sacramento, CA – The California Legislative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus praised the landmark decision handed down today by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. The Court's 4-3 ruling declared that gay and lesbian couples could no longer be excluded from obtaining civil marriages in Massachusetts.

The case, Goodrich v. Dept. of Public Health, centered on seven gay and lesbian couples who were denied marriage licenses by local officials. According to New England's Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), the organization representing the plaintiffs, the denial of marriage licenses violates the equality of rights guaranteed under the Massachusetts State Constitution.

"This historic ruling is a great victory for equal rights," said Assembly Speaker pro Tempore Christine Kehoe (D-San Diego), Chair of the LGBT Caucus. "Same-sex couples have formed families, raised children, and are important members of our community, but for years have been denied their legal rights and responsibilities. The Massachusetts decision upholds the tenets of equality and civil rights upon which our nation was founded."

"The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has given a truly unbiased legal interpretation in saying that the equal rights provision in its state constitution includes same-sex couples and our families," noted Senator Sheila James Kuehl (D - Santa Monica).

Under the State Constitution's "free and equal" clause, the Court held that there is no rational basis in denying same-sex couples the right to enter into a civil marriage. The Court stayed its decision for 180 days "to permit the Legislature to take such action as it may deem appropriate in light of this opinion."

"It's a significant step toward recognizing equal rights before the law for all people in permanent, committed relationships and their families," remarked Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg (D - Los Angeles). "I'm overjoyed. As my partner and I look forward to celebrating our 24th anniversary, we hope that we will be given the right to marry before our silver anniversary next year."

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"I applaud the court's decision to ensure that all couples in Massachusetts, regardless of their sexual orientation, are treated equally under the law," added Assemblymember John Laird (D - Santa Cruz). "This precedent will definitely help in the fight to extend this right in all the states."

"I am heartened by the decision of Massachusetts' Supreme Court," stated Assemblymember Mark Leno (D - San Francisco). "It is significant that they have recognized and declared that who and how one loves is a basic human right. This is yet another incremental step which will lead us to the inevitable -- same gender marriage."

The California Legislative LGBT Caucus was originally formed in June 2002. The members include Assembly Speaker pro Tempore and Caucus Chair Christine Kehoe, Senator Sheila James Kuehl, and Assemblymembers Jackie Goldberg, John Laird, and Mark Leno. The caucus' role is to present a forum for the California Legislature to discuss issues that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Californians and to further the goal of equality and justice for all Californians. The LGBT Caucus' formation made California the first state in the country to recognize an official caucus of openly-LGBT state legislators.

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